a We Claim

1. A parcel manager for managing transfer of data from a local computer to a remote computer, the parcel manager being embodied on a computer readable medium, comprising:

an interface object to present an interface into the parcel manager from one or more external applications;

a parcel object created via a first function presented by the interface object, the parcel object providing functionality to place the data in one or more parcel components for transferring to the remote computer; and

a notification object created via a second function presented by the interface object in response to a request from an external application, the notification object providing functionality to track a status of the parcel object as the parcel components are transferred to the remote computer.

2. A parcel manager as recited in claim 1, further comprising a bulletin object to hold update information regarding the parcel object.

3. A parcel manager as recited in claim 1, further comprising a monitor object created by the notification object to check for presence of the parcel components.

4. A parcel manager as recited in claim 1, further comprising a parcel database object to add and retrieve information regarding the parcel object in a database.

5.   In an electronic billing system in which a biller submits billing data to a service center and the service center generates billing statements from the billing data and electronically distributes the billing statements to consumers on behalf of the biller, a parcel manager executing on a biller computer system to manage transfer of the billing data to the service center and to track status of the billing data as it is transferred.

6.   A biller integration system, which interfaces with an existing billing system of a biller, comprising:

a translator to convert billing data from the biller's existing billing system to a particular format;

a statement designer to create a statement template for visually presenting the billing information in a customized arrangement that is determined by a biller;

a gateway to facilitate transfer of the statement template and the billing data to a billing service center and to monitor status of the statement templates and the billing data as they are transferred; and

a parcel manager implemented as part of the gateway, the parcel manager creating a parcel to carry the statement templates and billing data and generating notifications to provide the status of the parcel as it is transferred.

7.   A biller integration system as recited in claim 6, wherein the parcel manager tracks status of the parcel after transfer is complete.

8. A biller integration system as recited in claim 6, further comprising a management console that supports a user interface (UI), the management console interfacing with the gateway to present the status of the parcel as it is transferred.

9. A biller integration system as recited in claim 6, further comprising a parcel database to store information on the parcel.

10. A biller integration system as recited in claim 6, wherein the translator, the statement designer, the gateway, and the parcel manager are embodied as software modules stored on a computer-readable medium.

11. In an electronic system for transferring data from a local computer to a remote computer, a software program embodied on a computer readable medium for execution on the local computer, the software program presenting an application program interface to handle requests for services from an external application, the application program interface being responsive to separate commands to perform the following services:

creating a new parcel to carry the data from the local computer to the remote computer;

searching a group of parcels according to a date;

searching the group of parcels according to a state;

searching the group of parcels according to parameters supplied by the external application;

locating a particular parcel from the group; and

initiating a notification service that supports a monitoring function to track the parcel as it is transferred from the local computer to the remote computer.

12. In an electronic system for transferring data from a local computer to a remote computer, a software program embodied on a computer readable medium for execution on the local computer, the software program having a parcel object that is responsive to separate commands to perform the following services:

creating a parcel component to hold at least part of the data to be transferred from the local computer to the remote computer;

sending one or more of the parcel components to the remote computer;

creating a bulletin to hold status information regarding transfer of the parcel components;

searching a group of bulletins according to a date;

searching the group of bulletins according to a state;

locating a particular bulleting from the group; and

receiving a parcel component from the remote computer.

13. In an electronic system for transferring data from a local computer to a remote computer, a software program embodied on a computer readable medium for execution on the local computer, the software program having a bulletin object that is responsive to separate commands to perform the following services:

specifying a type of a bulletin, the bulletin being used to hold status information regarding transfer of the parcel components;

designating a pointer to detail information for the bulletin;

sending the bulletin to the remote computer; and

receiving the bulletin from the remote computer.

14.   In an electronic system for transferring data from a local computer to a remote computer, a software program embodied on a computer readable medium for execution on the local computer, the software program having a notification object that is responsive to separate commands to perform the following services:

awaiting information concerning creation or arrival of a parcel used to carry the data between the local and remote computers;

designating parcel events of which the status is requested; and

updating a status on the parcel.

15.   A method for managing transfer of data from a local computer to a remote computer, comprising the following steps:

receiving a request to transfer data at a parcel manager application program interface;

creating a parcel object to hold the data via a function of the parcel manager application program interface;

creating a notification object via a second function of the parcel manager application program interface; and

tracking, via the notification object, a status of the parcel as the parcel components are transferred to the remote computer.

16.   A method as recited in claim 15, further comprising the step of creating one ore more parcel component objects to hold the data via a function of the parcel object.

17.   A method as recited in claim 15, further comprising the step of updating the status of the parcel.

18.   A method as recited in claim 15, wherein the request is received from an external application, and further comprising the step of sending the status of the parcel to the external application.

19.   A computer program embodied on a computer-readable medium to perform the steps in the method as recited in claim 15.